

Mike Cranford Appointed New Commissioner



Mike Cranford

Governor Mike Beebe appointed Michael Cranford to the Arkansas Spinal Cord Commission on January 26, 2009. He will serve until January 14, 2019.

Mike is a lifelong resident of Foreman, Arkansas. In 1988, while attending a holiday beach party on the Red River, Mike made an ill-fated dive into shallow water, injuring his spinal cord at C6. He attended Southern Arkansas University and has worked in the local area since he completed his rehabilitation. He is presently the Foreman City Recorder and Treasurer and is involved in numerous civic and service organizations including the Chamber of Commerce, the Municipal League and the Masons. Mike is an avid outdoorsman who as he likes to say, "works to be able to hunt." Any conversation with him eventually turns to the outdoors.

When asked why he was interested in serving on the Commission, Mike said, "I have benefited from services from the Commission over the past 21 years and I just felt this was the best way to give back." Executive Director Cheryl Vines echoed Mike's comments, "We feel lucky to have a person with Mike's experience on the Commission. His knowledge of government as well as his personal experience will be a great resource." Mike replaces Joe McNiel on the Commission.

Please join our members and staff in welcoming Mike Cranford to the Arkansas Spinal Cord Commission.

2009 Conferences: Mark Your Calendar!

Arkansas Spinal Cord Commission will host two educational conferences this year instead of one large conference. Each event will offer educational sessions, vendors, demonstrations and opportunities to meet and greet old friends and new.

The first event, **Spinal Cord Injury: An Update**, will be held on **Friday, August 21st** at Pulaski Technical College Campus Center in North Little Rock. The conference will offer updates on medical research and cutting edge treatment in spinal cord injury as well as sessions to enrich the lives of people with spinal cord injuries. Continuing education units will be offered for health care professionals and a full exhibit hall of durable medical equipment and other technology will be available.

The second event, **Spina Bifida Fall Family Fest**, will be held on **Saturday October 24th** at Camp Aldersgate in Little Rock. Programs related to living with spina bifida will be provided for adults with spina bifida, parents and health care providers. In addition, a full educational/recreational program for children with spina bifida and their siblings will be held at the same site. This will provide an opportunity for families to learn more about spina bifida and meet others who share their experiences.

Additional information about both events will be mailed to ASCC clients over the next few months. So mark you calendar and plan to be there!

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SPINAL COURIER

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With Thanks

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ASCC accepts tax-deductible donations. Contributions are used to assist our clients through purchases of equipment and educational resources.

To make a contribution, please contact ASCC at **501-296-1788** / **1-800-459-1517** (voice) / **501-296-1794** (TDD), or send your donation to:

AR Spinal Cord Commission
1501 N. University, Suite 470
Little Rock, AR 72207

From the Director

On April 26th I will celebrate my 20th year with the Arkansas Spinal Cord Commission. I am as excited to be working for the Commission in 2009 as I was as a very green new agency director in 1989.

The past twenty years have brought a lot of change—we've doubled the number of Arkansans living with spinal cord injuries, the ADA was passed, Medicaid added durable medical equipment and personal care services waivers to their array of services, life expectancy after spinal cord injury has increased, incidence of spina bifida has decreased, human trials in spinal cord regeneration research are beginning, the Commission has expanded our services to include educational programs, a website and other resources, the list goes on... Unfortunately, some things remain the same: funding levels for needed services remain low and secondary conditions, particularly pressure sores and urinary tract infections continue to plague folks living with spinal cord injuries. There is not enough accessible public transportation and what there is does not extend to all the state.

But, each day I have the opportunity to come to work, assured that we are helping people. We provide services at no cost to our clients – I like to say it's the best way your taxes are spent – that make a difference in their lives. We keep the issues facing Arkansans with spinal cord disabilities in the forefront. We face new challenges and embark on new initiatives every day—if you have an idea for us, or a concern, please contact me. I'd love to hear from you!

One constant since I arrived here, has been Kay Lynn, our Case Manager in Ft. Smith, serving western Arkansas. Kay beat me to the Commission by a few months in 1989, from a position as Social Worker in local rehabilitation center, bringing with her a strong rehab ethic and contacts throughout the region. The concept of independent living seemed second nature to her. She has helped hundreds of ASCC clients, from those newly injured to those in the final stages of life, from babies to old folks and lots of others in between. I love to read her monthly reports highlighting her trials and tribulations and those of her clients. Her folksy manner cuts to the essence of what we do.

Unfortunately, **Kay will be retiring on April 1st.** That will be a great loss to all of us, her clients, her fellow Case Managers whom she mentored and served as a role model, the hospital and social services staffs who she served as a resource and to me! Kay will enjoy her retirement, traveling, working in her garden, spending time with her family and knowing that she has made a difference!

Good luck, Kay! Safe travels!

Cheryl L. Vines

Three-on-three Wheelchair Basketball Tourney Returns

Arkansas Tech University will again sponsor the *Rollin' Round the Rim* wheelchair basketball tournament from 11:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. on **April 24** at Tucker Coliseum. The Rollin' Razorbacks will play an ex-

hibition game at 4:00 p.m. Teams must be composed of males (m) and females (f) and at least one m/f must be on the floor at all times. For more information, contact ATU at **479-968-0378**.

Fayetteville Support Groups Recruit New Members

Two active spinal cord injury support groups in the Fayetteville area are recruiting new members. If you have ever thought about meeting others with similar interests, this is an excellent opportunity to become involved.

Sources Independent Living Center offers two groups: a spinal cord injury group and a separate family member and care provider group. The groups meet on alternating Mondays from 4 p.m. to 6 p.m. in the multipurpose room at Quality Associates next to Scull Creek Apartments. Freddie Honeycutt, a licensed counselor with Sources, facilitates the groups. Contact Freddie at **479-442-5600** or **fhoneycutt@arsources.org** for more information.

Health South has an active spinal cord injury support group that meets at 6 p.m. in the cafeteria on the 3rd Thursday of the month. Clients, family members and caregivers are all invited to attend this group. Contact Shara Manning at **479-444-2287** or **shara.manning@healthsouth.com** for more information about this group.

Therapeutic Arts Festival May 8th

The Little Rock Parks and Recreation Department's Therapeutic Recreation program is hosting the 10th annual Therapeutic Recreation Arts Festival on Friday May 8th. The festival will be held at the Clear Channel Metroplex at Colonel Glenn Road and I-430 from 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. This creative arts event is free to children with disabilities and their families. Activities will include games, make-it-and-take-it crafts, a magician, climbing wall, dance contest, music, food and fun! Come enjoy a great day of arts! For additional information call **501-918-5359** or email **ccovey@littlerock.org**



Joe McNeil is presented with a commemorative plaque by ASCC Executive Director Cheryl Vines recognizing his eight years of service on the Arkansas Spinal Cord Commission. Joe has been a driving force on the Commission, spearheading revisions in the long-term attendant care program, budget initiatives and promoting open communication between ASCC staff and the Commission members. He served as chair for over half of his tenure. The Commission has benefited greatly from his service and he will be missed.

Governor Signs Primary Seat Belt Law

On March 4th Governor Mike Beebe signed senate bill 78 into law. Now Act 308, this law establishes a primary seatbelt law in the state of Arkansas. This means that a driver may be stopped and cited by police just because he or she is not wearing a seat belt. Arkansas had had a 'secondary' seat belt law since 1991, but a primary law was defeated in the House of Representatives year after year. This year, with the Governor's support, the bill's perennial sponsor, Senator Hank Wilkins of Pine Bluff found the votes to pass the primary law. "The Commission has advocated for a primary seat belt law in Arkansas for over two decades," stated ASCC Director Cheryl Vines. "This law will save lives and decrease spinal cord injuries. We are grateful to Senator Wilkins and his colleagues for their perseverance in seeing this important initiative into law." The law goes into effect July 1, 2009.

National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) reports show that seat belt use in Arkansas at 69% is significantly below the national average of 82%. NHTSA also reports that seat belt usage typically increases 10-20% when a primary law is passed. We can expect to see increased usage as the new law takes effect this summer and a decrease in motor vehicle fatalities and injuries. How will that affect spinal cord injuries in Arkansas? According to the Arkansas Spinal Cord Injury (SCI) Statistics Report (Farley, 2008), just over 50% of all spinal cord injuries in Arkansas are caused by motor vehicle crashes. In those crashes, 72% of those sustaining SCIs were NOT wearing seatbelts. If seatbelt use increases, motor vehicle related spinal cord injuries should decrease.

Wheelchairs

By Tom Kiser, M.D., ASCC Medical Director

A wheelchair is their legs for someone with paraplegia, and it can be the arms for someone with tetraplegia, if the wheelchair is fitted with an environmental control unit to turn on/off lights and control other electrical household devices. The wheelchair becomes an essential part of the individual.

Your first wheelchair is important because it sets the standard for all your future wheelchairs. I see patients in wheelchair clinic who want the exact same wheelchair, because they are so comfortable in their present one. It is not very often that someone buying a new car would want the very same car; most want to upgrade to a better equipped or more advanced car. I think the biggest reason for the lack of interest in change is the need for routine.

A new wheelchair needs to match your home set up. Any small change in height, width, or ability to get close to an object or under a table can be very difficult for the person in the wheelchair and their caretakers. You need a similar seat height for your wheelchair so you can transfer easily and similar width and length to allow them to load and unload the wheelchair from their vehicle.

It is important to get a wheelchair that will match your needs and will last a long time. Recent Medicare changes require the vendor to fix the wheelchair, instead of replacing it, if it is cheaper to do so. Medicare will compare the price of repairing the wheelchair versus the price of a new wheelchair and will get you the cheaper of the two. If you accept a wheelchair from a company advertising on television

and your insurance company is billed, that may be the wheelchair you are stuck with for a long time, so be careful and choosy. You may want to check with your spinal cord Case Manager to ensure the vendor you are working with on the new wheelchair is reputable.

Which wheelchair is best for you?

A person with paraplegia needs a wheelchair which fits well, providing good lumbar spine support and placing your shoulders in good position to push the wheelchair and to reach objects on tables and shelves without causing shoulder pain. The main choices are between rigid and folding frame wheelchairs. The rigid frame wheelchair provides a firm base with less play and the frame tends to last longer; however, it is more difficult to fold and less compact, requiring you to remove the wheels and fold down the back. A folding

Which wheelchair is best for you?

wheelchair is heavier and the frame tends to have more play, but it folds more easily and the wheels do not need to be removed to load the chair in the car.

A tetraplegic needs a wheelchair that will support the trunk and operate smoothly and reliably. The main choices are a standard power wheelchair or a wheelchair with the pressure relieving options of tilt and/or recline. It is important to be able to conduct pressure relief even if you are unable to use your arms or lean adequately to do the pressure relief. I tend to like the tilt wheelchairs because they do not set off your spasticity and they allow



ASCC Medical Director Tom Kiser, M.D.

you to maintain a good posture. The recline option can cause you to slide down in the chair and you often need to be repositioned in the wheelchair. However, the reclining wheelchair will allow you to stretch out, and for some patients with a condom catheter or suprapubic catheter, it will improve drainage of the catheter when they are reclined in their wheelchair.

The wheelchair cushion is one of the most important parts of the chair. You need a cushion that will support you well, provide a good distribution of pressure, and prevent high pressure areas in the bony areas of your buttocks, such as your sacrum and ischii.

There is a variety of choices: air, foam, gel, and even alternating pressure pads. They all have advantages and disadvantages; sometimes

a computerized mapping system can help you decide which one is best for you. The most important thing to remember is that you need a wheelchair cushion that you understand and that works for you. When I check a wheelchair cushion in clinic, it is often upside down, the gel portion of the cushion is not where it should be, or there is too little or too much air in the air cushion. The wheelchair cushion is only useful if used correctly.

A wheelchair and cushion can provide years of locomotion and protection if properly maintained and serviced. Take care of your equipment and it will take of you!

New Device Enables Computer Use without Hand Control

A new device, the Invotek AccuPoint system, enables a person without hand control to fully operate a computer. With the system installed, the user can move the cursor, type, send email, surf the Internet and perform other tasks just by moving their head.

The AccuPoint system consists of software that installs unique, on-screen, AccuPoint controls and a keyboard, plus two pieces of hardware. The first piece of equipment is a small, black box with two adjustable, mirror-arms that attaches to the top of the computer monitor. The second is a small plastic triangle with reflective dots that sticks to the user's forehead with double stick tape. The equipment on the monitor detects movement of the reflective dots on the forehead and converts that movement into moving the computer cursor. Move your head to the right and the cursor moves to the right also. Leave the cursor on an item for a second and that item is selected or pressed. Make a mistake? Just click the backspace or undo key.

Since everybody's head movements are not the same, the user calibrates the system by pointing their head at an on-screen bull's-eye target at the beginning on a computing session. This takes about 20 seconds. After calibration, the user is ready to compute—using head movement to control the cursor. The calibration, with filtering, also allows persons with tremors, such as those with cerebral palsy or multiple sclerosis to use the system. (It sort of works like image “stability” on a digital camera.)

The AccuPoint system was developed by Invotek, a not-for-profit corporation, in Fort Smith, Arkansas. (Who says Arkansas isn't high tech?) The Arkansas Spinal Cord Commission (ASCC) is col-



ASCC client Martin Willems demonstrates the setup of his AccuPoint system. The AccuPoint mirror assembly is attached to the top of the computer monitor and the ACCUPoint software displays the on-screen keyboard. Cursor movement is achieved by moving the head. The mirror assembly detects movement of the reflective dots attached to Martin's forehead which is converted into cursor movement.

laborating with Invotek to make this device accessible to more Arkansans through a unique pilot program called AT Passport. The **AT Passport program** allows a user to rent the complete AccuPoint system for \$39.95 per month. This allows a person to use the system for a month or two to determine if it is right for them. If it isn't right for you, just mail it back to Invotek: end of commitment. If you like it and want to purchase it, you can make 24 monthly payments at \$74.95 or you can make one payment of \$1,495.

ASCC's job in this pilot project is to provide information to clients who could benefit from this device; Invotek's job is to deliver the device to the client and provide phone and email technical support. Client payments are made directly to Invotek.

Persons who would benefit most from this system are those with:

- Limited use of their hands (an injury level of C5 and above).
- A Windows OS computer (no Mac OS version) preferably with Internet access.
- Good computer skills or a person available to teach them.

To learn more about the AccuPoint system, visit Invotek's web site at **www.invotek.org** or call your ASCC Case Manager to receive mailed materials.

If you would like to try the AccuPoint system, call your ASCC Case Manager or call Invotek at **479-632-4166** or email **info@invotek.org**.

Up Close and Personal: Jimmy Ashley

This is the third in a series of articles profiling the ASCC Commissioners.



Jimmy Ashley was appointed to the Commission on December 1, 2001. It was a natural thing for Jimmy to join the Commission. "I wanted to help other people with spinal cord injuries," Jimmy notes, "and I thought that working with the Commission would be a good way to do it."

In 1980, at age 28, Jimmy was a deputy sheriff in Mississippi County. He was shot while responding to a domestic dispute call, damaging his spinal cord and resulting in a T10 incomplete injury. He went to the Hot Springs Rehabilitation Center for vocational rehab and met his future wife Chris, who was a Physical Therapy student. After they married, he returned to Chris' home in Wisconsin where they lived for 15 years. While in Wisconsin he got involved with the local Independent Living Center and participated in wheelchair sports.

Though he had never been much of a hunter growing up, he began hunting birds and deer in Wisconsin and when he returned to Arkansas in 1995, he continued to hunt. He joined the Arkansas Disabled Sportsmen's Association in 1996 and pretty quickly became their president. Working with Toney LeQuieu, they established the ADSA as a not-for-profit organization and the rest is history.

Over the past decade, Jimmy has worked with the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission, the Army Corp of Engineers and other groups to promote access to outdoor recreation for people with disabilities. Through Jimmy's efforts the Com-

mission has received grants from the Fraternal Order of the Eagles and he has been a great advocate with legislators at the capitol.

We are certainly glad to have him working on the Commission.

PROFILE:

Date And Place Of Birth: July 5, 1952, in Hoxie, AR.

Family Members: Chris, wife of 26 years, who is a physical therapist; sons Jimmy Dale, 38 and Jamie, 34; two daughters-in-law and six grandchildren, aged 3 to 17.

If I Did Not Live In Arkansas, I Would Want To Be: I cannot imagine living anywhere else.

My Favorite Meal Is: Shrimp, any way you cook it. I love seafood.

My Favorite Movie Is: *The Good, the Bad and the Ugly* starring Clint Eastwood.

My Favorite Song Is: *The Thrill Is Gone* by B. B. King.

Last Good Book I Read: Mark Wellman's biography, *Climbing Back*.

My Favorite Hobbies Are: Following the Blues, attending Blues festivals and musical events and, of course, I love the outdoors, hunting especially white tail deer and ducks, and fishing.

The Best Advice I Ever Received Was: From my mother: "Accept things in life, be happy with what you have got."

One Thing People Would Find Surprising About Me Is: I'd give anyone the shirt off my back.

My Advice to the Newly Injured: Learn to live with your disability - don't let society handicap you.

I Knew I Was Grown Up When: I got married the first time at 18 years old!

The One Thing I Always Wanted To Do But Have Never Had The Chance Was: Go on a bear hunt in Canada!

New Accessible Home Design Book Offers Great Ideas

Thinking of remodeling your present home to make it more wheelchair accessible or perhaps you need ideas for a new home? If the answer is “yes,” then a new book, *Accessible Home Design*, in ASCC’s McCluer Resource Center will provide you with plenty of examples and ideas.

This book presents a wealth of information concerning every area of the home. From entrance ramps, garages, doorways, living areas, kitchens and bathrooms to bedrooms, closets, showers, baths, grab bars, stairs, elevators, windows and outdoor gardens and walkways, all areas of the home are covered.

A chapter on planning is also included to ensure that your project has obtained all applicable permits and is in compliance with local zoning laws before construction begins. There are loads of color photographs of finished projects and dozens of architectural drawings to get your creative juices flowing. This book is sure to provide you with new ideas and guidance on the best way to make your construction project wheelchair accessible.

Accessible Home Design
– *Architectural Solutions for the Wheelchair User*, Second Edition, is written by Thomas Davies, AIA and Carol Peredo Lopez, AIA, and published by the Paralyzed Veterans of America.

ASCC clients may call Shalia O’Donohue at **501-683-1124** to check this book out of the library or it may be purchased (\$28 plus S&H) at **pva.org** or call **888-860-7244**.

Sign up for Spina Bifida Camp!

This year’s camp is June 28 through July 3, 2009, but you need to sign up now. We only have room for 40 campers, and acceptance is based on a first-come, first-served basis. The weeklong residential camp for children ages 6 to 16 is located at Camp Aldersgate, a quiet, rustic area in west Little Rock near Baptist Health Medical Center.

There is no fee for this week of camp. However, each family is responsible for providing transportation for their child to and from Camp Aldersgate. Applications and brochures were sent out in March. If you have questions regarding camp, or if you did not receive your application, call Mary Jo Stanton at **501-296-1788** or **800-459-1517** or by email at **mjstanton@arspinalcord.org**.

Fraud: don’t let it happen to you

Navigating the health care maze can be confusing, especially when unscrupulous people or businesses try to take advantage of Medicare beneficiaries by committing fraud or stealing identities. Here are some tips to help you protect yourself:

Don’t let door-to-door or phone salespeople pressure you into accepting items and services your doctor did not authorize.

If someone comes to your home and says they are a Medicare representative, shut the door and call the police. Medicare doesn’t send people door-to-door. It’s shrewd to be rude!

Identity thieves are dumpster-diving for your personal information. ALWAYS tear or shred sensitive documents before throwing them away.

Never give your credit card or Social Security number to anyone who calls or visits you without an appointment. You never know who they truly represent.

Medicare and Medicaid lose billions of dollars every year to fraud and error. Review your Medicare Summary Notice for errors. To report Medicare and Medicaid fraud, error, or abuse, or to request a copy of the Medicare Protection Toolkit, contact you SMP (State Medicare Provider) by calling (toll free) **866-726-2916**.

This article was reprinted from the Winter 2009 issue of Medicare Talk Newsletter with permission granted by Arkansas Foundation for Medical Care.

Social Security Office Changes Phone Numbers

The Little Rock Social Security office at 700 W. Capitol Ave. has announced recent changes in its telephone numbers. Individuals needing assistance should use the new number **866-593-0933** during normal business hours 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. For those unable to call during business hours, the office provides an automated number available 24 hours a day at **800-772-1213**. For individuals with hearing impairments, a TTY number is answered 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. weekdays at **800-325-0778**. Online services are also available at **www.socialsecurity.gov**.



The Squeaky Wheel

The squeaky wheel . . . gets the grease! This column is about grease—things that make life for persons with spinal cord disability go smoother and ease your way in the world. “Things” can be hints, equipment adaptations, innovations, tricks-of-the-trade, procedural shortcuts, life experiences, or things you “should have done but didn’t.”

And the lights went out in Arkansas . . .

The ice storms that recently hit north-central Arkansas tested the emergency disaster plans of over 100,000 families whose electricity was out, in areas, for 4 to 5 weeks.

Loss of power is inconvenient; for persons with a disability or those in a wheelchair, it can be a time of hardship and even life threatening.

It’s best to have emergency supplies and a disaster plan prepared ahead of time. You can find what

supplies should go in an emergency kit and information about disaster planning at **www.ready.gov**.

Without electricity, a person in a wheelchair may be at greater risk of heat exhaustion in summer and may have trouble staying warm in winter. Without power there is no way to recharge batteries for an electric wheelchair or a cell phone.

Were you prepared for this winter-time disaster? Did you have emer-

gency supplies and a plan of action that helped you cope with the loss of electrical power?

What advice would you give to other wheelchair users in dealing with a disaster?

Send in your disaster or success story and it will appear in a future issue of the newsletter. Hopefully others will learn from your experiences. (See postal and email address below.)

We invite you to send in your helpful hint—your bit of “grease.” Contact your ASCC Case Manager, write us at *Spinal Courier*, Arkansas Spinal Cord Commission, 1501 N. University, Suite 400, Little Rock, AR 72207 or e-mail us at **courier@arspinalcord.org** and put “Squeaky Wheel” in the subject line.

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